

Contemporary Kings and Courtiers.

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was evidenced by large arrears of taxation, and, to meet the deficit, Parliament in 1515 increased the income tax, which was levied even on the wages of labourers. It regulated these wages to the exclusive advantage of the employer, in the spirit of the old labour statutes, for the war had the effect of limiting the supply of labourers, while the practice of turning arable land into sheep pasture, in spite of enactments to the contrary in 1489, and again in 1515, led to the ejection of the peasantry on many estates. The return of disbanded soldiers swelled the proletariat. The inevitable result was the increase of crime and misery throughout the land. Utopia is an exposure and a denunciation of the demoralising effects of these evils.

Kings and courtiers became forthwith the butt of More's irony. Peter Giles discovers in Master Raphael the very man to counsel kings and place his knowledge at the service of the commonwealth. " I wonder greatly/' marvels Peter, " why you do not get into some king's court ? " Raphael disdains to give himself in bondage to a king or to join the crowd that sue for great men's friendship. Nay, but, interjects More, a man of your parts should apply your wit to the profit of the wealpublic, and this you can best do by putting into the head of the prince honest opinions and virtuous persuasions. So much labour lost, returns Raphael, for princes delight in war and feats of chivalry rather than in the arts of peace. Their councillors are all wise men who need no advice except from flatterers. If a man were to suggest something new that he had read or seen in other places, why, then, in order to save their wisdom, they must needs find fault, or take refuge in the last resort of stupidity—the wisdom of our forefathers. Therewith they stop a man's mouth. And yet they leave the best of the decrees of our forefathers unapplied, and if anybody suggests improvement they merely pooh-pooh them.

In all this More was indulging in a piece of self-revelation as well as hitting at the obtuseness of kings and ministers. No man ever showed less willingness to enter on a public career and play the courtier. It was because he felt the hopelessness of attempting to realise his ideas that he long refused to enter the royal service, and only reluctantly complied at last His indebtedness to Cardinal Morton, of " Morton's Fork" fame, his benefactor in his boyhood and early manhood,